Philosophical Transactions

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VII. *An Extraordinary Caſe of a Coſtive Perſon, in a Letter from Mr* B. Sherman *to Dr* Beeſton *of* Ipſwich; *with a Note on the ſame by Mr* William Cowper, *F. R. S.*

SIR,

THis perſon, whoſe Name was *Thomas Phillips* of *Eaſthorp*, near *Kelvedon* in *Eſſex*, was as well in every reſpect as a Child could poſſibly be till he was a year and a quarter old; at which time a very ſtrange and almoſt continual rumbling in his Inteſtines ſeiz'd him, the conſequence was a violent Looſeneſs, for which all the Phyſicians near the place could find no Remedy: But at laſt, when they deſpaired of the Childs Life, the Looſeneſs terminated in ſuch an unuſual Obſtruction, that he did not go to Stole for a fortnight or three weeks together, and from three weeks it proceeded gradually to the intervals of 17 or 18 weeks, and ſo continued till he came to be about the age of fifteen, when his Body reſumed its natural temper, which laſted 4 or 5 years, but then the Obſtruction returned, and continued, or rather increas'd till he dyed; for it was cuſtomary with him in the laſt years of his Life not to evacuate any manner of Excrement under the interval of nineteen or twenty weeks, and ſometimes (twice at leaſt) he had no diſcharge for one or two and twenty weeks together. He lived to be near 23 years of Age, and walk'd about almoſt to the hour of his Death; for he was ſuddenly ſeiz'd with very ſick Fits (but could not Vomit), two or three of which Fits carry'd him off in a few hours; and when he dy'd it was

nine

nine weeks after he had any Stole. He dyed about a year after I wrote to you firſt concerning him. I ask'd him ſome Queſtions, which I apprehended neceſſary, as whether he did Vomit often, or had at any time any Excrementous Taſtes in his Mouth, or did Sweat much, or made more Urine than in proportion to his drinking, or whether he found any eaſe when he did either Vomit, Sweat or Urined; all which queſtions were anſwered in the Negative. When he did go to Stole he evacuated very many times in a day, and ſeveral days together, until he had emptyed himſelf. But I muſt tell you, that his Mother aſſures me, that throughout his whole Life he never diſcharg'd any other than very thin Excrement.

Before his time of Evacuation came about, he was of an extraordinary bigneſs many weeks before his going to Stole, unleſs when he could break Wind, which he often endeavour'd to do, by laying his Body on the edge of a Table or Stool, but could not often by ſo doing produce the deſired effect. He declined the uſe of all Medicines for many years before he dy'd, contenting himſelf with going to Stole once in three or four months, or nineteen or twenty weeks, as above mention'd. But that which amuſes me as much as any thing is, that he generally had a petty good Stomach, and eat and drank as the reſt of the Family did; nay, till the time that his Body came to be very full, he could do the work of a Man at Plow, or ſuch like Husbandly labour, for Agriculture was his employment. I was very deſirous to have open'd his Body, but could by no means convince his Mother of the uſefulneſs and advantage of ſuch a Diſſection, which was no ſmall regret to me, for I thought it great pity that ſuch an extraordinary caſe ſhould not be inquired into, and indeed the Miniſter of the Pariſh did preſs his diſſection very hard, but the Mother was yet inflexible. This, Sir, is the truth of his caſe, and at firſt may ſeem almoſt incredible; but when I aſſure you that I had this account from

from the Perſons own Mouth in his Life time, confirm'd at the ſame time by his Mother who is yet living, and has very lately repeated the ſame to me, I hope it may obtain credit with you; beſides I can aſſure you, that all the Neighbourhood will witneſs the truth of it, many Gentlemen, Clergymen and others having had the curioſity to ſee and examine the Perſon,

Mr Cowper's *Note on the foregoing Letter.*

It's not improbable, if the Abdomen *of this Perſon had been opened, but ſome of its Contents would have been found not unlike thoſe I have mentioned, in my Explication of the 34th Table of Prints publiſhed by Dr* Bidloo, *where I take notice of a young Gentlewoman I diſſected, in whom I obſerved the* Omentum *ſo leſſened, that at firſt it appeared doubtfull if that part had ever been exiſtent in that ſubject; but on ſtrict examination the little Remains of it reſembled a* Congeries *of ſmall Glandules, ſtuffed with a Suet like matter. The whole Canal of the Inteſtines, even from the* Pylorus *to the* Anus, *was diſtended with Excrements, and the Surfaces of all the ſmall Guts adhered ſo ſtrictly to each other, that they could not be parted without tearing their external Membrane, to which the* Omentum *contributed by its adheſion: The whole* Compages *of the Inteſtins very much reſembling that of the external ſurface of the Brain covered with the* Pia mater, *ſo that the Meſentery in that ſubject could not be ſeen till this external incloſure was divided. By this diſorder, 'tis certain, the Periſtaltick motion of the Guts muſt needs be very much leſſened, if not quite hindered. The* Peritonæum *alſo in that caſe was very much thicken'd, and had ſeveral preternatural white bodies ſet at various diſtances on its external ſurface; the like appeared on the Stomach, which were much reſembled in figure the Miliary Glands on the back part of the* Aſpera Arteria.

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